



## **REPORT WORKSHOP 3: UPPER MOOKI LANDCARE REHYDRATION PROJECT**

### **‘CREATING RESILIENT LANDSCAPES TO SECURE OUR FARMING FUTURES’**

#### **Introduction**

Three educational workshops/events provided by Upper Mooki Landcare Inc were to be provided as part of the contractual arrangements for the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project with North West Local Land Services, under the funding Australian Governments National Land Care Program and the Regional Land Partnerships and Catchment Action NSW.

This report covers the final event conducted in The Woolshed at Windy Station, Pine Ridge NSW on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

The concept for the theme of the event arose from discussions with a number of landholder in the area, many of whom expressed their belief that regenerative agricultural practices would not “work” within the broadacre cropping communities, and that there was a divide between “the croppers” and “the graziers”. The aims of the workshop then became:

- To report back to the funding bodies and community on the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project, and to celebrate its near completion (wet weather has impacted on time frames for works completion). A short documentary on the project had been commissioned by NW LLS and was shown as the lead into the day.
- To showcase a number of regional farming “leaders” who are incorporating regenerative strategies into their farming/cropping practices.
- For attendees to network, share ideas and continue to build a “community of practice”
- For attendees to gain information from a range of services and businesses who exhibited on “The Board” of the Woolshed.

Extensive support for UMLC members to develop and manage the event was provided by Landcare staff (Lana Andrews, Regional Agricultura Landcare Advisor) and Penny Milson (Local Landcare Coordinator - Liverpool Plains Region). Anne Coote (previously the North West Regional Agricultura Landcare Advisor) Section Head, Agroecology Climate Friendly assisted in this development and was key to suggesting speakers from the region. Ongoing advice and support has been received from the LLS’s Project Manager, Angela Baker.

A Project Manager, Amelianne Michell was employed by UMLC specifically to manage the event as it became obvious that this event was beyond the technical and time capacity of the UMLC Chair to do so. Further support was provided by Susannah Cowley and Nigel Christianson of Nviro Media.

Charlie Arnott, winner of the 2018 Bob Hawke National Award for Land Carer of the Year, and Regional Ambassador for Harris Farm Markets was contracted to UMLC to facilitate the day in conjunction with Anne Coote. Having a “celebrity” was a successful drawcard with a number of participants mentioning this.



Charlie Arnott, Anne Coote, Susannah Cowley, Nicky Chirlian (Chair, UMLC)



Nicky Chirlian, Angela Baker (LLS Project Manager) & Tim Watts (Senior Land Services Officer (Projects))



## PUBLICITY:

The flyer below was created by the team and circulated through social media and promoted by Landcare and LLS staff, reaching 1875 people on UMLC Facebook page alone. An intensive Facebook campaign occurred over several weeks leading up to the event.

**CREATING RESILIENT LANDSCAPES TO SECURE OUR FARMING FUTURE**

**THURSDAY 13 MAY 2021 9:00AM - 4:00PM**  
**8:00AM REGISTRATION & EXHIBITOR STANDS**  
**WINDY STATION WOOLSHED, WINDY ROAD, PINE RIDGE, QUIRINDI**

**Tickets \$75**

Join Upper Mooki Landcare and special guest facilitator  
**Charlie Arnott**  
as they celebrate the completion of the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project. Also hear stories from regional farmers of their journey's in transitioning to practices that enhance landscape rehydration, regeneration and resilience.

**GUEST SPEAKERS**  
Scott McCalman, Andrew Watson, Roger Sendall, Stuart Austin, Justin Kirkby, Ian Carter, Wayne Chaffey, Roy Stanger & others.

**Bookings essential: <http://bit.ly/resilient-landscapes>**  
Enquiries to: [nicky@tallawang.com](mailto:nicky@tallawang.com)

This project is supported by North West Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and Catchment Action NSW.

Logos: Landcare, Timoroth Regional Landcare, Australian Government, National Landcare Program, NSW, Local Land Services.

Ongoing publicity leading up to the event was created through social media and a number of radio interviews, as well as articles in The Northern Daily Leader and The Quirindi Advocate. We also appreciate LLS sending out an EDM to their contacts about the event. This ongoing publicity was essential to ensure selling enough tickets to cover the costs of such a large and sophisticated event.

Bookings were administered through the Eventbrite booking service.



## PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:

The event was sponsored by:

- Australian Governments National Land Care Program and the Regional Land Partnerships and Catchment Action NSW, (providing additional funding to the UMLC Rehydration Project Grant) and Northwest Local Land Services.



Local Land Services

- Tamworth Regional Landcare (providing assistance through the development of the event and administrative assistance on the day)



- Climate Friendly (providing Anne Coote's time at no charge).



YOUR PARTNER IN  
CARBON FARMING

- Biocast Island Botannicals (with donations of product)





- Romani Pastoral Co (sponsored the use of Windy Woolshed with a deduction on hire, and supplied staff to assist on the day).



- Nviro Media (Susannah Cowley, Principal of Nviro Media, assisted with media management on the day and photography)





## EXHIBITORS:

A range of exhibitors were invited to attend and promote their goods and services. It was excellent to have exhibitors from large NGOs in addition to commercial enterprises coming from considerable distances to support UMLC.

Tamworth Regional Land Care	Upper Mooki Landcare Inc
Northern Slopes Landcare Association	North West Local Land Services
Best Farming Merah North	Land to Market Australia Braidwood
Climate Friendly Sydney	Mulloon Institute Bungendore
Professor Paul Martin Director Australian Centre for Agriculture and Law UNE Armidale	
Soils for Life Canberra	Accountable Agriculture Australia Willow Tree
Biocast+ Island Biologicals Oxley Island	Farmers for Climate Action Canberra
Resource Consulting Services Orange	Seed Gro Toowoomba
Nviro Films Burradoo	Fertile Farm Gunnedah
Meter Man Toowoomba	Soil Conservation Service NSW Quirindi
Pursehouse Rural Quirindi	Harris Farm Markets Sydney



Pinnacle Ag Gunnedah

The lofty space of the 45 stand Board was used for exhibitors to display goods and services and chat with participants. Exhibitors also participated in the sessions.



Participants from Murrurundi Peter Haydon, Mandy and Sandy Archibald with Craig Carter, Rehydration Project Leader, UMLC on the Windy Woolshed Board.

## THE PARTICIPANTS:

Final numbers (for catering) were 215. This included:

- 98 tickets purchased through Eventbrite
- 34 exhibitors (who purchased space on The Board, and attended the session as part of their charge)
- 12 Speakers (no charge) with spouses offered tickets reduced in price to cover catering
- Special guests, Windy Station staff, Event team
- Tickets purchased directly from UMLC



The Wool Room of Windy Woolshed provided a magnificent setting for the day, and was full to capacity. UMLC members provided simple but effective decoration of massed greenery from “Tallawang” Willow Tree.

## THE SESSIONS:

The Welcome: Anne Coote and Charlie Arnott welcomed and introduced the day, thanking sponsors and making note of the interest of their organisations (Climate Friendly & Harris Farm Markets) in the developing space of regenerative agriculture.

Mr Jason Allan, CEO of Walhallow Aboriginal Land Council, welcomed all to Country in language and spoke of the importance of healing country through regenerative practices.



### Session 1 Upper Mooki Landcare Rehydration Project.

The session opened with the first showing of a documentary commissioned by North West LLS about the Project, with an introduction by Susannah Cowley, documentary maker, from Nviro Media. The documentary is found at [https://youtu.be/nM\\_RfXPwc8M](https://youtu.be/nM_RfXPwc8M)

4 landowners involved in the Project spoke about and presented photos of the work on their properties funded by the Project, with summary information presented by Craig Carter (Project Leader) and Tim Watts (LLS Senior Project Manager).

Positive verbal feedback about this session was received throughout the day by the writer, with a number of questions asked as to what UMLCS might be planning next.



Project members Roger Ottery, David Lee, Cam McKellar, Nicky Chirlian, Peter Parnwell, Maddy Pursehouse, Craig Carter, Sandra Clark, Peter & Betty Dyle, with North West LLS Staff James Hutchinson Smith, Angela Baker and Tim Watts.

### Sessions 2 and 3

Event organisers identified eight leading farmers from the region who have been applying a range of regenerative strategies in their businesses of cropping and grazing:

- Scott McCalman "Kuranda" Mullaley
- Andrew Watson "Brigadoon" Boggabri
- Roger Sendall "Rossmore" Burren Junction
- Justin Kirkby "Amarula" Dorper Stud Gravesend
- Ian Carter "Conamarra" Pine Ridge
- Wayne Chaffey "Naours", Somerton
- Roy Stanger "Milridge", Curlewis
- Stuart Austin "Morroco" Kelvin



Final Q & A (L to R): Scott MacCalman, Ian Carter, Wayne Chaffey, Roger Sendall, Andrew Watson, Justin Kirkby, Roy Stanger, Stuart Austin.

These speakers provided details of their individual "journey" implementing a range of regenerative practices with varied operations. Successes, problems and future directions were touched upon. Many questions were taken from the floor. Feedback reflects the success of asking for these stories – farmer to farmer.

See attached program for biographies of the speakers.



Event Manager Ameliaranne Michell, with speaker Justin Kirkby and Lorroi Kirkby.

## FEEDBACK

Tamworth Regional Landcare staff constructed an evaluation questionnaire which was provided on line to all participants shortly after the event. A small response rate to this was received, however the event team also received a range of spontaneous feedback comments. The following is a sample of responses from “What was the main message?”

- Keeping water on-farm. Minimising runoff; maximising water retention in the environment.
- The journey will be different for everyone and there is no set solution for an individual’s challenges. Every situation is unique and should be treated as such. Doing a little is better than doing nothing in terms of making changes for a better environmental outcome.
- We need more events like this one :)
- That it is possible to regenerate farming land to protect against droughts and to enhance more productivity for better returns.
- Innovation and new ways of doing things just keep coming
- Strong commitment to regenerative agriculture among the presenting farmers using a variety of approaches, and happy to share their experience. It's a very practical thing!



- The hunger for this information in the rural community is growing
- That the message on ReGen & Resilience is filtering through & even the croppers are on board & doing some great stuff
- Only one message had a dollar figure attached to it. Green manure crops have cost me \$120/ha. All other messages were great and there is a lot of terrific information but when we are running businesses, the one with a dollar figure attached to it is the one I take note of.
- This is a grass roots movements that is taking off across Australia and I'm excited to be a part of it!
- We can work to lift carbon levels in a cropping/fallow/cover crop system.
- Changing the paddock between the ears is the first step.
- We can change practices if we change our thinking
- Ground cover is critical

#### Spontaneous Feedback and Suggestions:

- “Congratulations to you and your committee – well organised, great program in an impressive venue. Very well done”
- We really enjoyed the day. Learnt a lot. Great opportunity to network. Thank you, Upper Mooki!
- The day was informative with a great balance of speakers from various enterprises. It would be great to see some women amongst the speakers in the future
- Please find ways to take this show on the road! Especially the catchment rehydration
- More dollar figures comparing outputs from systems being used. \$/ha income, \$/ha costs & \$/ha profit generated before and after adoption of Regenerative Ag principles. A feeling and mission statements aren't enough for me to take to fee paying clients who I help with their businesses.
- It was wonderful hearing the journeys and stories of different participating landholders. Their personal journeys were very inspiring. It was great to hear from people integrating regen ag into cropping! And to hear from people at different stages in adopting regen ag.
- Watson was the only speaker to share details in numbers. I did expect more numbers, particularly organic carbon and soil carbon levels resulting from the various farming systems.
- Great to have paddock walks of project participants
- Continue to highlight regen cropping activities and strategies
- The venue was outstanding and organisers should be congratulated on a polished event. I noticed the majority of people stayed until the conclusion. I think the afternoon tea break should have gone ahead as planned to enable more time for



interaction with exhibitors. Networking is just as important as presentations in this type of event. The landholder speakers stole the show with their honesty, experience and knowledge on the subject. It was empowering and powerful. It was a great day and the bar has been set high!

- The venue was outstanding and the organisers are to be congratulated for a well organised day with excellent AV. A key strength was the 100% landholder presenters (rather than 'experts'/academics) who shared their experiences, passion and knowledge with humour and honesty. I think more time for participants to visit the exhibitors would have been fitting given their effort to be involved. I think the afternoon tea break should have occurred as planned rather than pushed to the end. Networking is a very important component of an event like this. Well done.
- "Just thought I would let you know the talk in the car (on the way home) was that you fellows put on an extremely good show! Thanks again. Two LLS board members have received and enjoyed your work"
- "This is what Landcare used to be. This is what Landcare should be! Farmers getting education ..."
- "It was a great event. I didn't look at my watch until 4:30 pm!"
- Congratulations again on such a fantastic event yesterday, I know myself and neighbours who I dragged along enjoyed it very much. It was a very healthy discussion on the drive home.

## **WHATS NEXT?**

Future planning with members of Upper Mooki Landcare will be conducted as part of the annual planning process. Feedback from this workshop suggests

- Follow up seminars with more financial and measured data included from specific properties.
- Visits to a number of the farms presented at the workshop.
- Site visits to farms involved in the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project.



Every person (and their dog) came to Windy!

**Report Prepared by Nicola Chirlian, Chair Upper Mooki Landcare for North West Local Land Services. 21/7/21**